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TAGS: [PREL](#) [PGOV](#) [TU](#)

SUBJECT: TURKEY: THE VIEW FROM THE HEARTLAND, PART ONE

(U) Classified by Political Counselor John Kunstadter.
Reason: 1.5 (b,d).

1. (C) Summary: During poloff's Sept. 10-13 trip to the western Black Sea provinces of Kastamonu and Sinop, contacts across the spectrum averred the importance of strong U.S.-Turkey relations but also took the opportunity to express their very palpable anxiety with USG Iraq policy, in particular what they assert is too "pro-Kurdish" a bias. Regional prosecutors described a court system slowly, sometimes painfully, adjusting to recently passed EU-related reforms. Elected mayors and State-appointed governors, meanwhile, are clamoring for local administration reform that would free them to be more responsive and more effective. End Summary.

2. (C) Kastamonu is a conservative, nationalist, agricultural province. Most of the mayoralties are held by ultra-nationalist Nationalist Movement Party (MHP) or other right-of-center parties. With an economy based on fishing and agriculture, Sinop has been known as a center-left stronghold for decades. Nevertheless, ruling AK Party did well in the Nov. 2002 general elections, capturing two of Sinop's three seats in Parliament (note: none of our contacts could offer any convincing argument as to why AK performed so well there. end note).

Attitudes Towards the U.S.

3. (C) Our interlocutors were at pains to claim that they support strong Turkey-U.S. ties. Many of our contacts -- from elected mayors and State-appointed sub-governors to businessmen and journalists -- spoke warmly of Turkish-U.S. relations, often tracing the history of the relationship from its beginning in the aftermath of World War II. Fishermen and local political leaders in Sinop spoke longingly of the days when the U.S. military had a large presence in the town (note: the base was closed in the early 1990s. end note). They romanticized the American presence, which they said had brought more to Sinop than financial benefits. Many learned English and forged strong friendships that they continue to try to maintain today. For example, one local activist from main opposition Republican People's Party (CHP) -- which has spewed anti-American public rhetoric for months -- provided poloff a list of Americans who had lived on the base and with whom he wanted to re-establish contact.

4. (C) Even as our interlocutors denied that any anti-American sentiment exists among Turks, several took the opportunity to vent their frustrations with what they assert is a one-sided USG Iraq policy. In typical Turkish fashion, our contacts -- including Kastamonu acting governor Fahri Oluk, the AK Party boss in Kastamonu, and Sinop chief prosecutor Kuris -- waited until the end of the meeting to voice their concerns. Sinop's CHP chief, meanwhile, led off the meeting with a weak defense of his party's position against Turkish involvement with coalition efforts and refused to talk about anything else for the next hour. In both Kastamonu and Sinop, our contacts raised the same questions: 1) why hasn't the U.S. rid Northern Iraq of the presence PKK-KADEK militants?; and 2) why does the U.S. trust Kurdish groups in Iraq more than Turkey?

EU Reform: Growing Pains

5. (C) Public prosecutors in both Kastamonu and Sinop see EU-related reforms as positive for Turkey's democratic development. In Kastamonu, Ali Ceyhan Ceyhan spoke positively about recent human rights training he had received in the U.K. He said that he had attended the course with the province's police chief, who, he asserted, does not tolerate

torture of any kind. Ceyhan expressed hope that the EU would recognize Turkey's progress on this front. The Sinop prosecutor, Ethem Kuris, echoed Ceyhan's thoughts on the EU, noting he too had received human rights training. Kuris admitted, however, that full implementation of the legal reforms recently enacted by Parliament will take time.

16. (C) On the other hand, both prosecutors claimed that reforms had made their jobs much more difficult. In particular, Ceyhan noted that the reduction of the detention period for suspects to 24 hours had made collecting enough evidence especially difficult. Twenty-four hours is "simply not enough" to build a case, he said. He lamented that "now sometimes it seems that suspects have more rights than the victims." For his part, Kuris acknowledged that the reforms would lead to changes in the State Security Court (DGM) system but claimed that, for now, they remain essential to Turkey's ongoing fight against terrorism. In terrorism cases, he said, because it is not always easy to gather evidence that would be credible in the normal criminal courts, they refer these cases to the DGMs, where rules for determining the admissibility of evidence are looser.

Bring on Local Administration Reform

17. (C) One common theme that cut across party affiliation and had support among all State representatives with whom we talked was the need for significant reform to Turkey's cumbersome local administration. Echoing comments that we have heard in Ankara, mayors in Kastamonu and Sinop, along with mayors of smaller towns in each province, asked rhetorically whether some Ankara bureaucrat knows better than the mayors what projects should be undertaken.

-- Sinop mayor Hamza Ince -- from center-right Motherland Party (ANAP) -- bitterly complained that he is caught between a glacier-like Ankara bureaucratic machine and a regional administrative court with the power to stop any municipal project.

-- Sinop deputy governor Ramazan Aksoy said the province needs more flexibility to be better able to address the infrastructure needs of local residents.

-- Kastamonu mayor Turhan Topcuoglu -- a member of MHP -- noted that without local administration reform, he will not be able to complete city-wide infrastructure improvements.

Comment

18. (C) In general, our Turkish interlocutors in both provinces seemed level-headed, practical, sincere and willing to speak their minds. As an illustration, Mehmet Yildirim -- CHP Kastamonu deputy and local garlic producer -- escorted poloff around the Kastamonu central market, preening as local journalists took photographs. Yildirim confronted an older constituent and asked if the man like Yildirim's work so far as a deputy. The older man replied: "What do you mean? Here you are wondering around the market, doing nothing. What is it that I am supposed to like?"

EDELMAN